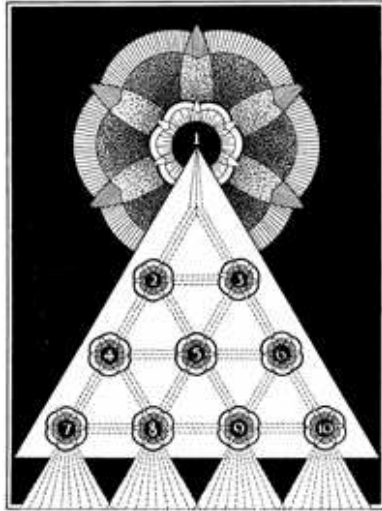


A Brave New World

Aeonics and the Western Tradition



A free ebook by Alan Chapman

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A Note to the Reader

This ebook was originally commissioned as an essay for an anthology that never materialised. My brief was to present the magical view of time, most notably how the various magicians over the years have approached eschatology, and especially as it appears in the work of Aleister Crowley.

Surveying the work already available on the subject, I came to realise that most commentators were prone to misrepresenting the magical view of time due to a lack of context; and where a little bit of research might have filled in the blanks, we find instead recourse to flights of the imagination.

I have therefore written a general survey of the magical view of time beginning almost three thousand years ago in Ancient Greece, taking in Pythagoras, Plato, Neoplatonism, Gnosticism,

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Qabalah, Enochian magick, the Golden Dawn, Thelema and Crowley, Kenneth Grant, Maat magick, Chaos magic and the latest eschatology on the block, the 2012 myth.

In light of this historical survey I attempt to uncover and reinstate the purpose of the magical view of time, and to present exactly what the study of Aeonics has to say about our current situation and what we can expect to occur in the not-too-distant future.

Alan Chapman
November. 2009

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Introduction

In his masterpiece *The Reign of Quantity and the Sign of the Times*, the French Sufi Rene Guenon [1886 – 1951 CE] demonstrates the historically recent shift in the West towards the consideration of reality in purely quantitative terms. This can be seen over the last few hundred years in the industrial revolution, where the craft of the artisan was replaced by the division of labour; the academic reduction of reality from the Great Chain of Being to just the physical alone; the cultural rise of uniformity; and more recently the equality of extreme postmodernism. These examples demonstrate a general trend towards division through confusion: each phenomenon is considered a separate unit, but indistinguishable from the next.

According to Guenon, traditional societies – such as those found in Hinduism and Sufism - perceive the world in a predominantly

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qualitative sense, due to their foundation in a class of individuals who are the keepers and facilitators of a peculiar but very real experience. This personal and direct experience has been described as the sudden revelation of all phenomena being ‘fused, but not confused’ – an experience known to various traditional societies as God, the One, Tao, Emptiness, Brahman and Allah. It is the loss of this ‘gnosis’ that has led to the current degenerated condition not only of the religions that were once responsible for imparting this experience, but of Western civilisation itself.

For the traditionalist and his successor in the West, the magician, number is not simply the set of successive units we generally suppose; as Aleister Crowley, arch-mage of the Twentieth Century, states in *The Book of Thoth*:

It is an undeniable fact that any given number is not merely one more than the previous number and one less than the subsequent

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number, but is an independent individual idea, a thing in itself; a spiritual, moral and intellectual substance, not only as much as, but a great deal more than, any human being. Its merely mathematical relations are indeed the laws of its being, but they do not constitute the number, any more than the chemical and physical laws of reaction in the human anatomy give a complete picture of a man.

This consideration of number necessarily informs the magician's view of time. The modern appreciation of time as the passing of one uniform unit to another is a degeneration of the occult consideration of the *qualities* implicit in time itself. For the magician, time exhibits periodic characteristics that manifest in the cultural, moral and spiritual state of humanity, and the study of these periods and their transition points is today known in the Western magical tradition as Aeonics.

The First Aeonics

The Western magical tradition can be traced back to Ancient Greece, most notably the Pythagorean, Platonic and Neoplatonic movements that built upon the shamanistic and superstitious 'inherited conglomerate' of Greek religious belief. Greek religious practice included possession (something we know Socrates experienced), dream incubation (which involves sleeping in a specific Deity's temple in order to receive a divinatory dream), various forms of augury, talismanic sorcery, Deity creation, meditation, channelling, psychedelic ritual, and the psychotherapeutic practice of 'philosophical midwifery', a method whose ultimate aim is the facilitation of direct personal experience of the traditionalists 'gnosis', or what is more popularly referred to today as enlightenment. We also have the Greeks to thank for the ubiquitous four elements and pentagram found in contemporary occultism.

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In *Works and Days*, written around 700 BCE by the Greek poet Hesiod, we find the earliest existing account of aeonics, being a description of the five *Ages of Man*:

First came the Golden Age, which was ruled by the God Kronus, when men lived long and peaceful lives with the Gods. Upon their deaths, these men would become 'guardian spirits' or what the Greeks called 'daimons'. (The 'daimon' is not to be confused with a Christian demon; rather, the Greek root of the word means 'wise' and 'daimon' can be considered an alternative name for the Holy Guardian Angel of contemporary Western magick).

Next came the Silver Age and Kronus' son Zeus took over the reins for this and the remaining ages, although it is here that things take a turn for the worse: men fight each other and refuse to worship the gods, leaving Zeus no option but to exterminate the race. Luckily, the dead become 'blessed spirits'.

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The Bronze Age was an age of great war and the men of this era eradicated themselves, leaving no 'spirits' behind.

Here, Hesiod inserts the Heroic Age, although later this era will be excluded from the model by the Roman poet Ovid [43 BCE – 17 CE], probably due to the inconsistency of an age that isn't identified by a metal and that actually improves on the age preceding it. Here, great heroes arose and performed wonderful deeds, before dying and going to Elysium.

Last and certainly least comes the Iron Age, where morality is absent, greed is the order of the day and evil is committed with no remorse or shame. Hesiod believed himself to be living in the Iron Age; and I'm sure he would agree that contemporary civilisation is a product of this age too.

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Although some people (such as St. Jerome [347 – 420 CE]) have tried to ascribe dates to the occurrence of these ages, we have no surviving records of what dates or lengths of time were given to each age by the Greeks, although we can certainly surmise that the Iron Age has lasted at least three thousand years.

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The Yugas

Rather interestingly, and possibly due to the Greek civilisation once reaching the Hindu Kush mountains of Pakistan, we find the exact same Ages of Man (minus the Heroic Age)¹ in the Puranic¹ Hindu Yugas:

The Satya Yuga (Gold), a time when most people had direct experience of realisation and suffering didn't exist; the Treta Yuga (Silver), when mental powers come to the fore and invention takes place; the Dvapara Yuga (Bronze) sees science flourish and the end

¹ The Puranas are a corpus of important Hindu religious and philosophical texts, the earliest written accounts being compiled around the third century CE, although they are said to have existed in an oral form for at least a millennium before. The exact composition of their earlier form can only be guessed at, and they were certainly modified throughout the medieval period and even up to the present day.

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of this yuga occurs with the death of Krishna as described in the Mahabharata; and finally the Kali Yuga (Iron) when materialism and a preoccupation with physical survival are predominant. Just like the Ages of Man, the Yugas delineate a progressive deterioration of mankind's direct experience of the divine.

Unlike the Ages of Man, we know that specific periods of time, based upon vast astronomical cycles, are ascribed to each yuga. But much like Hesiod, we are said to be living in the Kali Yuga or Iron Age.

Hesiod and Ovid don't tell us what is supposed to follow the Iron Age, but there are two schools of Hindu thought regarding what occurs after the Kali Yuga. Either the cycle begins all over again with the advent of a new Golden Age, or the cycle simply reverses itself and we begin a slow ascent back up the ages by revisiting the Bronze Age.

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As Hesiod's Ages of Man predates the earliest written account of the Hindu Yugas by almost a millennium, it could be that this concept of cyclical time was added at a later date before the concept of aeons became incorporated into Hindu thought; or it could be that the Ages of Man are but a fragment of a much older philosophy. Whether or not the Hindu's developed their own version of aeonics prior to contact with the Greeks is a matter of debate, but we do know that a few centuries after Hesiod came a new Greek view of the universe that would account for this cyclical concept of time, and that would go on to have a huge impact on Western thought itself.

This Greek view of the universe is intrinsically linked to the word 'aeon' itself.

Aeon

The word 'aeon', which is a Latin transliteration of the koine Greek 'aion', is commonly translated as 'age' or 'eternity'. Hesiod's ages are therefore aeons, and we know that three hundred years later Plato [428 – 348 BCE] used the word 'aion' to denote the world of metaphysical² experience as 'eternity'. A further five hundred years down the line and we find the word 'aeon' used to describe what appear to be sentient, angel-like emanations of God in Gnosticism³. Jewish mysticism was married with Gnosticism around the first century CE, and by the 13th Century the Gnostics'

² A metaphysic is simply a language for describing profound or mystical experience.

³ Gnosticism is also Greek in origin, and there is evidence that the movement predates Christianity. However, today the term is usually reserved for the second and third century 'Christian gnostics'.

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'emanations' had become the Paths and Sephiroth of Jewish Qabalah⁴.

For a long time it was believed that the Sephiroth, the numerological practices of gematria and aiq bekar, the attribution of the elements, zodiac and planets to letters, and the concept of emanation and return were all Jewish inventions; we now know⁵ all of these ideas can be traced back in time through the movements of Gnosticism, Neoplatonism, and Platonism all the way back to one man: the Greek magical genius Pythagoras [580 – 490 BCE], who lived a century after Hesiod, but approximately

⁴ Like Hesiod and the Puranas, the Qabalah also presents us with four 'worlds' (Azilut, Yitzirah, Beriayah, and Asiyah) that are considered emanations of God.

⁵ See *The Greek Qabalah* by Kieran Barry.

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eight hundred years before the first written accounts of the Hindu Yugas.

Pythagoras is single-handedly responsible for the invention of isopsephy (the divinatory art of aligning concepts by numerical value – called *gematria* in Hebrew, a corruption of the Greek word ‘geomatria’ meaning geometry), of attributing symbols to letters of the alphabet, the use of the pentagram, the practice of monasticism, philosophy (he was the first person to describe himself as a ‘lover of wisdom’) and the idea that both reality and the divine are best approached and understood through number: everything can be measured and predicted in cycles and rhythmic patterns, *including time*. The Ten Sephiroth or emanations of the Hebrews are in fact the Pythagorean Tetractys or Decad (see *Figure 1.*), the first mathematical model of emanations.

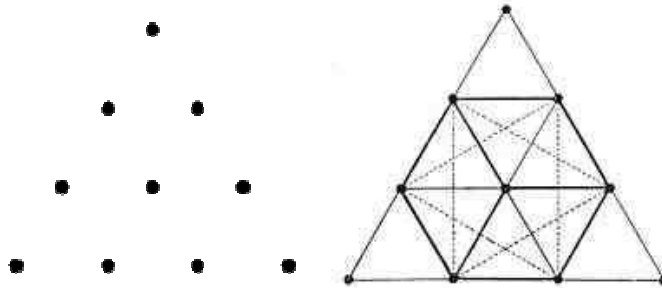


Figure 1. The Tetractys (with its ten dots joined to reveal the Pythagorean 'cube' and 'star'.)

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We cannot be certain if Pythagoras ascribed to an explicit aeonic model; but given the extent to which Pythagoreanism came to dominate Greek thought, it seems likely that the Greeks' consideration of time was informed by the Pythagorean view of the mathematically predictable and cyclical universe. Could this account for the cyclical nature of time given in the Hindu Yugas, and the reason this concept is absent from Hesiod's model?

Pythagoreanism is the common thread running through both Platonism and Gnosticism, and so although we appear to have three variants on the meaning of aeon - Hesiod's 'age', Plato's 'eternity', and the Gnostic's 'sentient divine emanation' - it doesn't necessarily follow that we are not dealing with the same concept.

Central to Pythagoreanism, and every traditional society since, is the concept of *emanation and return*. Once emanated by the Godhead, all things must eventually take a return journey back to

the source. As emanation and return is a universal process, it can be observed in a fractal sense and at all levels of experience. Consider the cycle of a complete breath, the seasons of the earth, and the birth and eventual death of all creatures⁶ on the physical plane. On the metaphysical plane, and of primary importance to the magician, the concept of return is most apparent in the process of enlightenment, which is made up of stages and cycles that progressively lead from the emanation of a separate individual consciousness – or that which has been divided - to the return of the final untangling of the knot of perception and the realisation of divinity – or to that which is unified.

⁶ Of course, the end of a breath doesn't result in awareness of God, but in the fractal equivalent of God at the physical level. Personal direct experience of God must be sought at the metaphysical level, or the level of consciousness itself.

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In light of the above, I would like to propose that just as the ancient Greek word for ‘experience’ or ‘to behold’ is often mistranslated as ‘form’ or ‘idea’ (as in Plato’s ‘Idea’ of the Good, which is actually a description of a mystical experience), the word ‘aeon’ is mistranslated when we consider it explicitly as a quantity of time or a divine intelligence.

Rather, aeon is a metaphysical description of a discrete stage of emanation and return. These stages exhibit qualities of the divine⁷ in direct proportion to their relative position to what the Greeks called The One, or the Gnostics and Kabbalists called God. As we

⁷ For Plato, this would include intelligibility; for the Neoplatonists, the three classic attributes applied to the Divine: unifying, perfecting, and purifying in proportion to the emanations place in the Decad. See *The Celestial Hierarchy* by Pseudo-Dionysius for more on this.

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can only know the process of emanation and return through these stages, 'emanation' is probably the best translation of 'aeon', providing we understand that should the process be one of emanation, each successive stage will exhibit progressively limited divine qualities: the eternal becomes temporal, the intelligible becomes confused, the unified becomes divided, and so on. Of course, the reverse is true for the process of return.

Understood in this light, Plato's 'eternity' and the descending Ages of Man are all emanations of the divine, with eternity at the top (being metaphysical and so non-temporal) and the Iron Age at the bottom (being material and temporal), with an appropriate relative expression of divine intelligence implicit in each emanation (hence the Greek and Hindu ascription of a deity to each emanation or age - and ultimately to all phenomena).

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Aeonics then are not just simply a schema of time periods, but a description of the structure of the universe and a map of progress through emanation and return, primarily as a means to understanding and experiencing the divine itself. And this is crucial: for the Pythagoreans, Platonists, Neoplatonists, Gnostics and Qabalists, aeonics is a tool for understanding and facilitating the process of enlightenment.

The Qabalist's Tree of Life (see *Figure 2.* below) is perhaps the most sophisticated aeonic map we have today, and the process it outlines of emanation (from Kether or 1, down through each number until we reach Malkuth or 10) and return (the reverse journey from 10 to 1) can be used to recognise the progress of emanation and return in every phenomena, at every level of experience and in every fractal, from temporal emanations on the macro scale of species development, to metaphysical emanations at the micro scale of personal spiritual development.

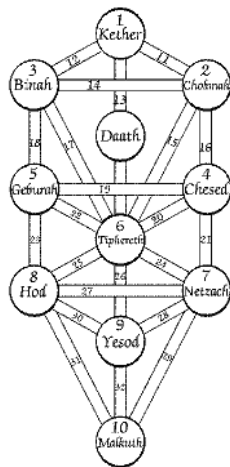


Figure 2. The Tree of Life

Although the definition of aeonics offered at the beginning of this essay is still true in a very basic sense, by considering the history of aeonics we have come a long way from the idea of a description of successive quantified time periods. Not only is this idea a degeneration of the concept of emanations described above, but this degeneration is actually predicted by both the Greek's Iron Age and the Hindu's Kali Yuga.

Decline

Around two thousand years ago, Neoplatonism and Gnosticism both fed into the Western tradition that we know today as magick. The end of Greek civilisation and the banning of philosophy and science by the Christian Emperor Justinian heralded the advent of the Dark Ages, which forced the distillation and subsumation of Greek metaphysics into Christian mysticism around 6 AD by the Greek theologian and mystic Pseudo-Dionysius. The Western

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tradition would only resurface intermittently during this period, most notably as the underground movement of Alchemy. Due to the secrecy surrounding the tradition during the dark ages, it's very difficult to judge to what extent aemonics were understood or taught by the medieval magicians.

It's only with the dawn of the Enlightenment that we get any clear idea about the condition of the Western tradition, as a number of magical giants began to test the waters and openly champion various magical teachings (mostly within a Christian context, of course). Giordano Bruno, Pico Della Mirandola and Marsilio Ficino introduced the world to Hermeticism and Christian Cabala; while perhaps the greatest and most underrated genius of the Elizabethan age, Dr. John Dee, inaugurated the practice of

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Enochian magick and arguably created the Rosicrucian movement that flourished in Europe in the 16th and 17th Centuries⁸.

Most interestingly, it is in Dee's communications with a number of beings purporting to be the angels that conversed with the Biblical prophets that we come across perhaps the first written account of *the beginning of a new aeon*. Between 1582 and 1587, these entities, who have since become known as the Enochian angels, dictated an incredibly complex magical system of tables, sigils and equipment, a language that exhibits syntax but defies analysis, and a book called *Liber Loagaeth*, which, according to the angels, was intended to usher in a new aeon.

Here we have supposedly divine entities claiming the beginnings of a new temporal emanation. Previous to this event, we only have

⁸

See *The Rosicrucian Enlightenment* by Francis Yates.

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the records of previous aeons occurring in the form of surviving teachings. Peculiarly, there is no mention of what particular aeonic model the angels or Dee were working with, although we know that the angels promised a time that certainly improved on the last.

More importantly however, this divine revelation of a new aeon did provide a completely new method for achieving direct personal experience of God, in the form of the 48 Enochian Calls or Keys. Is this just coincidence, or does it demonstrate something fundamental about the nature of the reception of an aeonic revelation?

Apocalypse

Although a mystic, Dee was a devout Christian, and the angels he conjured presented themselves within what appears to be a biblical cosmology. The angels seem to have taken a specific liking to the symbolism of the psychedelic *The Apocalypse of John* (sometimes called *Revelation*), which suffers from a rather spurious but nevertheless popular interpretation as a prediction of the end of the world.

However, the cosmology presented by the Enochian angels is markedly different to that of orthodox Christianity, so much so that I would suggest the Enochian angels are not Christian at all; rather, they simply clothed themselves in the most accessible

spiritual context available at the time⁹. In the 16th century, this was literal Christianity.

For instance, the Enochian goddess 'Babalon' or 'Babalond' at first appears to be the same 'Babylon' who is mentioned in *The Apocalypse of John*; but further investigation suggests some degree of synonymity with Innana, Ishtar, Ashtoreth, Astarte, Isis Lilith, Nephthys and Nuit. The Enochian angels tell us Babalon is the Sacred Whore; we only find one place where such a concept appears in Christianity, although we do find her in nearly all traditional magical religions. In what other manner then could this

⁹ As a practicing magician of the Twenty First Century, I can say that the Enochian Angels' appearance seems influenced by the contents of the magician's mind. Very rarely do I get a clichéd angel when scrying the aethyrs, and sometimes I even get figures from popular culture. The experience of colleagues seems to corroborate this.

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aspect of divinity be presented to the literal Christian, other than in the guise of the 'harlot' who rides the Beast in *The Apocalypse*?

It's also interesting to consider that the etymology of 'apocalypse' leads us to its original meaning, that of 'revelation'. Considering the angels wished to introduce a new aeon, what better Christian language is there for presenting such a concept other than what we find in *The Apocalypse of John*?

It should come as no surprise that a system of magick couched in the Christian symbolism of *The Apocalypse of John* will suffer from the same interpretation as the book itself, and many magicians (such as the half-baked Donald Tyson) have considered the Enochian system of magick and the angels' original communications as apocalyptic, as opposed to aeonic.

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It is with the common 'Christian' interpretation of Dee's work that we get the first known infection of the Western tradition with the degenerated concept of apocalypse; instead of the infinite holistic emanation and return of aeonics, we now have the finite end of a linear universe. And the Enochian angels are the harbingers of our doom!

Apocalyptic thought posits a one off event that brings an end to everything as we know it. For the Christian, this would be Judgement Day; for the deranged psychic, the arrival of our Space Brothers; for the alien abductee, environmental or nuclear disaster; for the ignorant Enochian magician, the arrival of demons unleashed by the use of the Keys or Calls of Enochian magick¹⁰.

¹⁰

See *Enochian magic for beginners* by Donald Tyson.

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Aeonic thought differs in that although it promotes the idea of the end of one world and the beginning of another, it does so not through an apocalyptic event, but through *creeping normalcy*: small daily changes that go relatively unnoticed, until a dramatic change has taken place right under our noses. Without the provision of definite dates and without entertaining the idea of apocalypse, creeping normalcy goes some way to explaining the difficulty most people have with corroborating just what aeon we might happen to be in.

The Officers of the Golden Dawn and the Ceremony of the Equinox

After Dee's Enochian magick and Rosicrucian movement came Elias Ashmole's Freemasonry, all of which would form the basis for the magical revival of the 19th Century. It was during this revival that three Freemasons called Woodman, Westcott and MacGregor Mathers would found the Golden Dawn, a magical order that would be the single greatest influence on Twentieth Century occultism.

The Qabalistic structure of the Golden Dawn is based on that of the Societas Rosicruciana in Anglia, with magical grades that date back to 1781. Each grade also corresponds to an officer rank and an Egyptian deity. At every vernal and autumnal equinox the Golden Dawn would rotate its members through the ranks and issue new passwords during the *Ceremony of the Equinox*. The

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members would rotate through the last seven ranks and the corresponding godform as given in *Table 1* below (the first three officers were considered chiefs who did not rotate).

The godforms of the officers and the *Ceremony of the Equinox* would later become of great importance to the Golden Dawn's most famous student and the greatest magician of the Twentieth Century, Aleister Crowley.

Officer	Godform	Sephira (Grade)
Praemonstrator (Chief)	Isis	Chesed, 4 (7=4)
Imperator (Chief)	Nephthys	Geburah, 5 (6=5)
Cancellarius (Chief)	Thoth	Tiphareth, 6 (5=6)
Hierophant	Osiris	Veil of Paroketh (Portal Grade)
Hiereus	Horus	Netzach, 7 (4=7)
Hegemon	Maat	Hod, 8 (3=8)
Keryx	Anubis of the East	Yesod, 9 (2=9)
Stolistes	Mut	Malkuth, 10 (1=10)
Dadouchos	Neith	Malkuth, 10 (1=10)
Phylax	Opowet (Anubis of the West)	n/a (0=0)

Table 1. Officers of the Golden Dawn, their godforms and attribution on the Tree of Life.

The Aeon Strikes Back

In 1904, Aleister Crowley wrote a book from dictation by his Holy Guardian Angel that announced the beginning of a new emanation, the Aeon of Horus, and Crowley was to be its prophet. This was the first time since Dee that apparent spiritual forces had contacted a magician to announce the beginning of a new aeon. It is interesting to note that at the time of the reception of this book – known as *Liber Legis* or *The Book of the Law* – Crowley was heavily involved with Enochian magick: his magical name at the time as Adeptus Major was Frater Ol Sonuf Vaoresaji ("I reign over ye" in Enochian) and he spent sometime during this year translating the conjurations of the Goetia into Enochian.

The introduction given in the 1938 O.T.O. edition of *The Book of the Law*, reads:

[Liber Legis] explains that certain vast 'stars' (or aggregates of experience) may be described as Gods. One of these is in charge of the destinies of this planet for periods of 2,000 years. In the history of the world, as far as we know accurately, are three such Gods: Isis, the mother, when the Universe was conceived as simple nourishment drawn directly from her; this period is marked by matriarchal government.

Next, beginning 500 B.C., Osiris, the father, when the Universe was imagined as catastrophic, love, death, resurrection, as the method by which experience was built up; this corresponds to patriarchal systems.

Now, Horus, the child, in which we come to perceive events as a continual growth partaking in its elements of both these methods, and not to be overcome by circumstance. This present period involves the recognition of the individual as the unit of society.

Here we have Crowley setting out an aeonic model comprised of three ages: the aeon of Isis (the Mother), the aeon of Osiris (the Father), and the aeon of Horus (the Child). We can see that Crowley's aeonic model is not quite as sophisticated as the model I've set out above, as for some unknown reason he believes these aeons last approximately 2,000 years each, perhaps based upon the length of the 'ages' of the Zodiac (a complete cycle of the precession of the Equinoxes takes roughly 26,000 years, which is 2,160 years per star sign or 'age'). Sadly, contemporary anthropology reveals Crowley's outline of the development of man as frankly ludicrous. Crowley's sources remain undisclosed.

However, we can see parallels between Crowley's aeons and the godforms of the Golden Dawn officers. In the *New Comment* given in *The Law is for All*, Crowley discusses the future fourth aeon of 'Hrumachis' prophesied in the *Book of the Law*:

*Hrumachis is the Dawning Sun; he therefore symbolizes any new course of events. The "double-wanded one" is "Thmaist of dual form as Thmais and Thmait," from whom the Greeks derived their Themis, goddess of Justice. The student may refer to The Equinox, Vol. I., No. 2, pp. 244-261. Thmaist is the Hegemon, who bears a mitre-headed scepter, like Joshua in the Royal Arch degree of Freemasonry. **He is the third officer in rank in the neophyte ritual of the G.D. following Horus as Horus follows Osiris.** He can then assume the "throne and place" of the Ruler of the Temple when the "Equinox of Horus" comes to an end.*

In addition to referencing the officers of the Golden Dawn above, Crowley also published the *Ceremony of the Equinox* in his book *The Equinox of the Gods* as a nod towards its relevance.

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We can see that two elements of the Golden Dawn system are important here for Crowley: the order of the godforms ascribed to each Golden Dawn officer, and the idea of rotation at a set time. However we must be careful not to believe the source of Crowley's aeonic model (and the *Book of the Law* for that matter) is to be found solely in the Golden Dawn material; after all, Isis does not precede Osiris in the officer ranking, and it is the members of the Golden Dawn that change position during the *Ceremony of the Equinox*, not the godforms!

It seems the concept of aeons has again been presented by spiritual forces in the symbolism most relevant to the magician receiving the communication of a new emanation. In Dee's case it was Christian Apocalypticism. For Crowley, we have the new aeon dressed in the Egyptian godform schema implicit in the officer structure of his current magical order, with the idea of rotation at a set time given in the Equinox ceremony.

It follows that we cannot look to the Golden Dawn ritual material for a more complete understanding of the aeonic model presented by Crowley, beyond knowing that the aeon to succeed Horus will be that of Hrumachis, or as it is given in the schema, the Egyptian goddess of justice, Maat.

Thankfully, although Crowley's aeonic model is sketchy at the larger scale, he did present a more thorough account of the emanation of Horus itself.

The Aeon of Horus

Emanations occur in fractals, and just as each Sephira on the Tree of Life (see *Figure 2.*) contains another Tree of Life (*ad infinitum*), so too can we find the emanation of Horus as a Tree of Life within the Sephira of the larger Tree of Life of Crowley's aeonic model.

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For instance, Crowley's aeons, based on the Golden Dawn attributes, might look like this on the Tree of Life (note that no attributes are given for the top of the tree, or numbers 1 to 3):

Number	Sephiroth	GD Godforms	Crowley's Aeons
4	Chesed	Isis	Isis
5	Geburah	Nephthys	
6	Tiphareth	Thoth	
---	Veil of Paroketh	Osiris	Osiris
7	Netzach	Horus	Horus
8	Hod	Maat	Hrumachis (Maat)
9	Yesod	Anubis	
10	Malkuth	Mut and Neith	

Table 2. Crowley's aeons on the Tree of Life

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Horus within the Golden Dawn ranking is attributed to the Sefhira Netzach or number 7 above. If this schema is accurate, we can see that as the aeon of Horus succeeds the aeon of Osiris, the macro-scale is currently in a process of emanation or descent down the tree (with the next aeon being Maat).

Within the Sefhira of Netzach we can also find another Tree of Life at the micro-scale. This Tree of Life outlines the emanation of Horus, and the top of the tree is given in *Table 3* below (the following godforms have been taken from the *Book of the Law*):

Number	Sephiroth	Godforms
0	Ain	Nuit and Hadit
1	Kether	Heru-Ra-Ha (Horus)
2	Chokmah	Chaos (The Beast)
3	Binah	Babalon (The Scarlet Woman)
--- (11)	Veil of the Abyss (Da'ath)	Choronzon

Table 3. The Emanation of Horus attributed to the Tree of life.

Just as with Dee's Enochian magick, Crowley's take on the Western tradition - which he called *Thelema* (Greek meaning 'will') - is heavily coloured by the symbolism of *The Apocalypse of John*. But again, the cosmology presented by the *Book of the Law* is anything but Christian, being more accurately a very complex mix of

pseudo-Egyptian¹¹, Greek and Enochian divinities. The similarity with Dee's work appears to be no coincidence: Crowley explored and developed the material given in the *Book of the Law* through performing Enochian visionary magick, otherwise known as 'scrying the aeythers'¹². Also, it must not be forgotten that Crowley was raised by a bigoted apocalyptic Christian sect known as the Plymouth Brethren, which made him something of a biblical expert.

¹¹ I say 'pseudo-Egyptian' because the deities that appear in the *Book of the Law* are not classical Egyptian deities, with a number of their names being based on faulty translations of Egyptian, and some being completely original. Just as with Crowley's concept of the development of man, his understanding of Egyptian culture and language has been superseded by contemporary scholarship. As a result, it could be argued that the Thelemic deities are in fact English gods!

¹² See *The Vision and the Voice*.

It is interesting to consider that it was the Plymouth Brethren who were responsible for introducing Dispensationalism to Britain. Dispensationalism is a strange mix of pseudo-aeonic thought and apocalypticism that posits a number of ages typified by diverse forms of testing humanity's conformity to God's will, ending with the Rapture and a literal thousand year reign by Jesus Christ on Earth. We can certainly say Crowley's upbringing prepared him for his role as Prophet of the Aeon, but it would be lazy to consider his young exposure to Dispensationalism as the 'cause' for his future involvement with aeonics, especially considering the complexity of the Thelemic cosmology as mentioned above.

Thelema (see *Table 3*) posits two unmanifest pseudo-Egyptian divinities: Nuit, who is the goddess of infinite space, and Hadit, the infinitely small but omnipresent point. The union of Nuit and Hadit produces a unity known as Heru-Ra-Ha, or the Egyptian god Horus. Horus is the first emanation (or the first Sephira, Kether, the

Crown) of our current world – hence, Horus is the ‘Crowned and Conquering Child’. The multitude of this unity, or the sum possible points of view, is known as Chaos, a Greek god. The sum possible experience of these points of view is the bride of Chaos, who is known as Babalon. Babalon is the Sacred Whore of Enochian magick, who ‘receives’ all life. The union of Chaos and Babalon reflects the union of Nuit and Hadit at a lower order – and the result of this union is the manifest world as we know it (numbers 4 to 10 on the Tree of Life).

Chaos is further identified with the Beast given in the *Apocalypse of John*, as is Babalon with the ‘Woman clothed in the Sun’ who rides the Beast. Crowley identified himself as the Beast 666 at an early age (no doubt due to his upbringing), and he would refer to his girlfriend or wife as the Scarlet Woman, another name for the Sacred Whore.

Despite the fact Crowley used to love to play on his identity as the Beast 666, especially when dealing with Christians, his approach must never be considered anything but aeonic. As we have seen, the element of his magick that could be seen as Christian is more accurately Enochian. For Crowley and other Thelemites, the new aeon began with the reception of *The Book of the Law* in April 1904, which overlaps with the death of the old aeon of Osiris. There is no apocalypse; only a gradual ascendancy of Horus through *creeping normalcy*.

However, the transition is not without its signs. In the *Book of the Law* we find the following passage:

III: 46. I am the warrior Lord of the Forties: the Eighties cower before me, & are abased.

Of course, World War 2 occurred in the Forties, and the Cold War – with its threat of nuclear Armageddon - in the Eighties. Crowley never commented specifically on this passage, although he did consider the two World Wars as necessary ‘sacraments’: the world first needed to be ‘bathed in blood’ before the transition could really take place.

What’s the point?

Just as Dee’s Enochian communications provide a means to enlightenment in the form of the 48 Calls or Keys, so too does Crowley’s *Book of the Law* in the form of the Word of the Aeon, Abrahadabra, and the Word of the Law, Thelema. Within Crowley’s aeonic model, each of the aeons present a particular approach to achieving enlightenment, liberation, awakening or realisation – the Great Work as it is known in the Western Tradition – that is appropriate to the culture of each aeon. In

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Greek terms, enlightenment simply means the realisation of the One (indeed, Plato used the word 'aion' to denote metaphysics), and so we can say that the predominant divine qualities inherent in each emanation are the most obvious means of reaching the One itself. For instance, in the aeon of Osiris, we have the methods of Jesus (whose Word was 'Agape') and Mohammed (whose Word was 'Allah'). The methods provided by these two prophets are now no longer contemporary; a new approach to enlightenment is required, and Crowley's method ('Thelema') provides this. Thelema is relativistic instead of dogmatic, promotes the exercise of natural desires as a means towards fulfilling the Great Work as opposed to prescribing asceticism and withdrawal from the world, and recognises the 'childish' individual as the primary unit of society.

Note that this does not mean the 'magical formulae' of the old aeons are redundant; rather, they have been transcended but

included. The One itself is not conditioned by any emanation, and as such it is still possible to get enlightened using the old ways; however Thelema should offer the more appropriate means. With both Dee's and Crowley's divine announcements, a new means to understanding and experiencing enlightenment was also provided. And these methods are directly related to the model of the universe posited by the contacting entities. Considerations aside of divine intelligences actively working to get the human race enlightened, might we be missing the point by focussing on the descriptions of the periods offered by the aeonic models, when *the model itself IS the method to enlightenment?*

By giving up every action to Nuit and liberating our Will do we become divine Kings in Thelema. In Hinduism, Tantra or the Left Hand Path is the Kali Yuga used as a means of realisation. By 'scrying' the ascending levels of the Enochian Aethyrs, we approach God.

This also holds true for models considered a product of an old aeon: in Platonism, Plato's tetralogies – more commonly known as the Divided Line or the Analogy of the Cave – are not just maps of reality but the contemplative means to reach the Vision of the Good itself. In the Qabalah, it is only by applying the Tree of Life to all phenomena that direct experience of Kether is achieved. It is only by recognising the Three Characteristics that we become Buddhas.

The model IS the method.

Crowley appears to be the first to catalogue and classify the various methods to genuine realisation in terms of their cultural and personal relevance. Might we pick up where he left off by redefining aeonics as the study and application of the models of emanation and return? Might this definition be sophisticated

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enough to include the progression of the divine process at both a personal and temporal level, whilst making the point of aeonics – explicit in its origins in Pythagoreanism, and echoed by every expression of the Western tradition for the past three millennia – explicit once again?

Might it also make apparent those models or schools of thought that are currently considered aeonic, but are actually nothing of the sort?

Here come the aliens

The point of Crowley's aeonics (and so magick itself) seems to have been completely lost on his successors. Crowley's student, Charles Stansfield Jones (Frater Achad), quickly departed from Crowley's model by claiming the Aeon of Maat (the next emanation after Horus, or number 8 on our Tree of Life – see *Table 2*) had already begun; later, another student of Crowley's, Kenneth Grant, would develop the idea by claiming the aeon of Maat was actually running parallel with the aeon of Horus.

Grant calls this dual aeon Ma-lon, and further extended Crowley's aeonic model by adding three aeons that precede the aeon of Isis: these are the aeons of the Void, Chaos, and the Earth. The Grant model runs thus: Void, Chaos, Earth, Isis, Osiris, Ma-lon. The incongruent and seemingly arbitrary nature of this schema should come as no surprise to anyone familiar with the wild 'creative'

fantasies set out in Grant's 'Typhonian' writings; and just like his books, the point eludes us. After all, the overarching theme of Grant's work is the demonstration of the 'ancient astronaut' theory: the involvement of extraterrestrials in the development of life on Earth. Indeed, the aim of Grant's magical order, the Typhonian O.T.O., is to prepare the Earth for the return of these extraterrestrials who 'initiated the original life-wave'.

Grant's model was in turn developed by Maggie Cassady (A.K.A. 'Nema') who claimed to have received a channeled text all of her own called *Liber Pennae Praenumbra* that confirmed the parallel nature of the aeon of Horus and Maat. In an apparent effort to add some consistency to Grant's model, Cassady grouped the aeons of the Void, Chaos and Earth into a 'Nameless Aeon' characterised by the Egyptian god Bes, and further posited a 'Wordless Aeon' to succeed Maat represented by the Egyptian god

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Harpocrates. Cassady's model runs as follows: Bes, Isis, Osiris, Horus, Maat, Harpocrates.

Rather bizarrely, both Grant and Cassady do actually offer us magical formulae, but both fail to demonstrate a means to enlightenment, indicating a failure to understand aeonics in the first place. For Grant, Crowley never uttered the magical formula of Horus – which is the Word of the Aeon, Abrahadabra, given in the *Book of the Law* and which Crowley goes to great pains to discuss in the majority of his writings – and so Grant gives us instead the word 'Tutulu'¹³, a play on the name of a Lovecraftian extra-terrestrial named Cthulhu!

¹³

Outer Gateways by Kenneth Grant

Cassady's word or formula is 'Ipsos', and is thankfully a little more credible as it comes directly from her channeled text, where it is described in the following manner:

*It [Ipsos] names the Source of Mine [Maat's] Own Being - and yours. It is the origin of this sending, that **channels through Andromeda and Set. What race of gods do speak to Man, O Willed Ones?** The word of them is both the Name and Fact.*

*It is for thee mantram and incantation. **To speak it is to bring about certain change.** Be circumspect in its usage - for if its truth be known abroad, it would perchance drive the slaves to madness and despair.*

Only a true Priest-King may know it fully, and stay in balance through his GO-ing flight.

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Again, we seem to be dealing with a formula not concerned with enlightenment, but extraterrestrial contact, and more specifically the conjuration of 'certain change'. For Grant and Cassidy, aeonics doesn't appear to be a means to understanding divine emanation and return, but a way of seeing the world that offers the promise of an as yet undetermined future with our alien brothers and sisters.

Chaos

The end of the seventies heralded a new movement known as Chaos magic, with the publication of Peter Carroll's *Liber Null*. Carroll stripped down magic to its basic elements with a strict emphasis on practicality. This was good news: magic was suddenly accessible and relieved of the pompous and overly serious speculations of armchair magicians such as Grant.

Chaos magic recognises that belief can be used as a tool, and so the Chaos magician is free to draw upon many sources for his magic: religion, shamanism, cartoons, science-fiction, mythology, popular culture and science.

In keeping with this eclectic and reductionist approach, Carroll would later propose in *Liber Kaos* a new aeonic model completely

divorced from the 'divine revelation' of emanation and return, seemingly based upon a naïve sociological speculation:

All the philosophies, creeds, dogmas and beliefs that humanity has evolved are variants of three great paradigms, the Transcendental, the Materialist and the Magical. In no human culture has any one of these paradigms been completely distinct from the others.

For Carroll, it is the predominance of one or two of the three 'paradigms' at any given time that determines the characteristics of a culture. For some undisclosed reason Carroll believes the cultural influence of a paradigm follows a set pattern of ascendancy and decline, which he calls the *Psychohistoric Mechanism of the Aeons*. Based upon the possible combinations of these 'paradigms', Carroll gives us four aeons, divided into eight sub-aeons:

Aeon	Sub Aeon	Predominant paradigm
Shamanic	Animist	Materialist/Magical
	Spiritist	Magical
Religious	Pagan	Magical/Transcendental
	Monotheist	Transcendental
Rationalist	Atheist	Transcendental/Materialist
	Nihilist	Materialist
Pandemon	Chaoist	Materialist/Magical
	?	Magical

Table 4. The Psychohistoric Mechanism of the Aeons.

We are currently witnessing the emergence of the Chaoist sub-aeon where we can expect a truce to be made between science and magic; apparently we can already see this in the seemingly 'magical' nature of quantum physics. Soon magical phenomena will no longer be regarded as proof of any transcendental nature to the universe, and technology will seem increasingly 'magical' in its operation.

Beyond speculation, does the psychohistoric model have any practical value? Carroll tells us:

Armed with the psychohistoric model of aeonic change, the magician can readily see what factors he or she should work on to hasten, impede or reverse aeonic development in a particular culture or sub-culture.

Carroll uses the model to justify urging the reader to remove any lingering elements of religious or transcendental thought from magic, and to present it in a 'rational camouflage' to prevent it being a target for ridicule by rationalists and fundamentalists alike. Only by doing so can we speed up the development of the Chaoist aeon.

Is it not interesting that this psychohistoric model and its approach to culture and the Western tradition are predicted by another aeonic model that is millennia old? According to the *Ages of Man*, and its Asian counterpart the *Yugas*, the reduction of divinity to a mere idea and human history to a product of ideas is characteristic of the Iron Age or the Kali Yuga; a time when mankind is at its furthest point from the source, when the divine is no longer recognised and reality is quantified, concretised and reduced to a divided but confused mass. Indeed, Carroll's new aeon is not revealed by spiritual agencies, but by his own unfounded

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speculations; it does not describe a divine, hierarchical and holistic universe, but a reality devoid of any value beyond the beliefs with which we choose to view it; it denies the inherent qualities of time in favour of a mechanised, predictable pseudo-sociology; more importantly, it does not provide a means of achieving the Great Work, which is enlightenment, realisation or liberation, but urges the hastening of the reduction of reality to materialism and magick itself to a mere peculiar mechanism.

This is aeonics completely divorced from itself.

2012

There are a number of chaos magicians that ascribe to Pete Carroll's emergent Chaoist aeon, and still more Thelemites who accept they are living in the aeon of Horus (I don't think anyone takes Grant seriously); but by far the most popular aeonic model within contemporary occultism is the 2012 myth.

The Grandfather of the 2012 myth was Terence McKenna, who in 1971 journeyed into the Amazon jungle with some friends and consumed *a lot* of magic mushrooms. During this time many 'revelations' occurred to Terence and his brother, all of which are recounted in his book *True Hallucinations*. To cut a long story short, with the aid of his fungal ally, Terence 'discovered' that the Chinese system of divination known as the Yi King is in fact a calendar of sorts for predicting the influx of novelty into history. Later, with the help of a mathematician, Terence constructed a

graph he called *Timewave Zero* to demonstrate his findings. Rather unnervingly, the graph predicts a point in time when novelty reaches infinity. Arbitrarily lining up the peaks of novelty in the graph with actual historical events, Terence found that the 'singularity at the end of time' lined up with the year 2012.

Exactly what is supposed to happen when novelty reaches infinity is anyone's guess, but Terence seemed to be of the opinion that we would undergo some kind of transformation into a new energetic mode or level of being, something along the lines of the reality experienced during a DMT trip. Despite his heavy use of psychedelics, Terence's thought is clearly linear and apocalyptic.

It wasn't long before a contemporary of McKenna's, Jose Arguelles, would bring the supposed Mayan significance of the year 2012 to the public's attention. The Mayans had a very accurate and sophisticated calendar system made up of various

cycles, one of which is called the b'ak'tun, or Long Count. The current cycle, which started August 11, 3114 B.C.E. is due to end at the Winter solstice in 2012. The Mayans left no indication as to what the end of this Long Count cycle would mean, which is just one cycle out of many, but for Arguelles, as he relates in *The Mayan Factor* , it is clear:

The unique moment, the moment of total planetary synchronization, 13.0.0.0.0 on the beam, will arrive - the closing out not only of the Great Cycle, but of the evolutionary interim called Homo Sapiens. Amidst festive preparation and awesome galactic solar-signs psychically received, the human race, in harmony with the animal and other kingdoms and taking its rightful place in the great electromagnetic sea, will unify as a single circuit.

In 1993 Arguelles announced he had become a living channel of the ancient Mayan ruler Pacal Votan, from whom he received his revelations. Arguelles clearly recognises history in terms of a sequence of ages or epochs, and so married with McKenna's *Timewave Zero*, the 2012 myth was now a curious mixture of both pseudo-aeonic and apocalyptic thought.

It would take John Major Jenkins and his book *Maya Cosmogenesis 2012* to lend the myth some apparent scientific weight. Although McKenna was the first to suggest the idea in print, Jenkins proposed that the end of the Mayan Long Count is actually pointing towards a very unusual astronomical alignment, when the Sun and the centre of our Galaxy will line up on 21st December 2012.

Sadly it is far from definite when this alignment can be said to have occurred, considering the vast size of the centre of the Galaxy.

In recent years the pseudo-aeonics of 2012 have found a new champion in the writer and neo-shamanic guru Daniel Pinchbeck. In *2012: The Return of Quetzalcoatl*, Pinchbeck relates his own journey with psychedelics and his eventual realisation that he is actually the embodiment of the Feathered Serpent god of the Aztecs, Quetzalcoatl. Pinchbeck marries the work of McKenna, Arguelles and Jenkins into a perhaps more grounded vision of the future, where he sees 2012 as more of a marker for a transformation in consciousness that will result in cultural revolution, as opposed to a higher vibratory ascension. Or does he?

The 2012 myth is perhaps the most syncretic of all the models of time entertained by magicians, and the above overview is hardly comprehensive; frequently new elements are added to mix, with new prophecies from Native Americans and various forms of alien

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life arriving all the time to mark 2012 as an important date in human evolution.

But the difference between the 2012 myth and aeonics is apparent. Instead of providing a means to enlightenment and a model for understanding it, 2012 reduces enlightenment (where it entertains the idea at all) to an inevitable apocalypse divorced from any action on the part of the individual. Furthermore, enlightenment is not a metaphysical experience, but a *physical* one. We are told not to look above and beyond the physical plane to the very real and attainable metaphysical level of experience for the answer to the Big Questions – which is something we can only achieve by ourselves - but to await the necessary arrival of some outside agency, whether it is aliens or solar radiation, to save us from ourselves.

With the Greeks, Dee and Crowley, aeonics pointed towards the metaphysical; with Grant and Carroll, its aim fell lower to fix on the imagination and the rational; now, with 2012, aeonics is concerned solely with the physical, and in some cases, the destruction of even that.

The End

We have seen that aeonics has had a long and varied history since its beginnings in Ancient Greece, where its original form can be glimpsed in what remains of Gnosticism, and in the Jewish tradition of the Qabalah. Its nature as a model for understanding the structure of reality and the universal process of emanation and return has over time suffered at the hands of apocalyptic thought and the very degeneration predicted by the earlier Greek and Hindu aeonic models. Despite the fact it seems apparent that aeonics is inescapably associated with divine or spiritual agency,

exemplified in the works of Dr. John Dee and Aleister Crowley, today's contemporary magicians are just as likely to entertain pseudo-aeonics based on 'creative' fantasy (in the case of Grant), a naïve and unfounded view of sociological development (as we have seen from Carroll) and the neo-apocalypticism of the syncretic 2012 myth.

The original concern of aeonics, most explicit in Crowley's model of the aeons, but apparent from the very beginning in Plato's use of the word 'aion', is that of facilitating enlightenment, or performing the Great Work. For millennia this has been lost from mainstream culture; and over the last century it has slipped even through the fingers of the magicians themselves.

So what does this mean for the future of aeonics?

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What is interesting to consider is that Rene Guenon, with whom we started this essay, believed he was not only living in the Kali Yuga, but at its *end*; it was only a matter of time before the Golden Age would return, when humankind would once again be close to the divine, and the traditional teachings would make a return.

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